

THE CONDITION OF VILLAGES IN BENGAL
AND SOME SUGGESTIONS
ABOUT THEIR RECONSTRUCTION



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AND SOME SUGGESTIONS

ABOUT THEIR RECONSTRUCTION

1. Formerly a Bengal village was composed of principally six classes of people and by the prevailing custom each individual class had its separate work to do. There was a division of labour and this system worked harmoniously and brought about the prosperity of the villages. Consequently no individual suffered from want of food and the system acted as a substitute for a poor law as is prevalent in the west. Firstly, there were the Brahmins. It was their duty to teach the village children, both male and female, primarily in the three R's. The education was so arranged that the young people used to read as well as work with their parents in their respective vocations which on leaving schools they joined in right earnest. Besides, the Brahmins used to perform the pujahs and other ceremonies necessary in Hindu household and for this purpose they were divided into almost as many sub-branches as the various classes of people. Then came the Kayasthas. It was their duty to organise the secular work in the villages and do other things necessary for keeping peace and they were mostly either the landlords or their representatives. Next came the Baidyas who

used to treat people in their illness and give them the necessary medicines which they used to prepare locally from various herbs, roots, etc. Then there were the milkman, potter, barber, blacksmith, carpenter and washerman and *kolu*, *Dom* and *Hari* and fisherman and weaver. All these had lands but in small quantities and in lieu of their services they used to get paddy, straw and other crops from the cultivators of the villages according to the prevailing customs. Then there were the *Bagdis* and *Dulias* whose duties were to cultivate the lands of every body in *bhag*. The former were also the defenders of the villages under the guidance of the landlord or his representative and this service used to be done by the *Dulias* as well. Lastly, there were the cultivators who used to cultivate the lands themselves on terms previously settled according to the customs of each village. In every village there were Panchayets composed of elderly and opulent residents of the villages selected from all classes. They were generally about half a dozen in number and their President was the landlord or his representative. They used to try all civil and criminal suits of the village and their decisions were respected and carried into effect by all concerned. If any work of public utility was to be done in the village, it was settled by the Panchayets and they approached the landlord, who used to advance the necessary money to the villagers which the latter used to repay to the landlord by levying a cess or tax on the land and not on any individual. In this way there was no water scarcity in the

village and the villagers used to lead a simple and contented life by using the articles produced locally. If there was any difference with the neighbouring villages, the Panchayets used to settle it amicably to the satisfaction of all concerned.

2. With the Mahomedan rule there came a slight change over the village life but still the old system was on the whole kept intact and the people used to live peacefully. The Mahomedans never established any big towns except the capitals of the provinces and their imperial capital at Delhi. So very few men left the villages and villagers remained what they were from time immemorial. Most of the Bengali Mahomedans were converts from Hinduism and naturally there was no ill-feeling between them and their Hindu co-villagers. It is still known to the older people that the Mahomedans half-a-century ago never used to sacrifice cows in villages but used to visit Hindu houses during Hindu festivals and partake of the feast like their Hindu co-villagers. I think it is within the living memory of many people that there were no riots or even quarrels between the Hindus and Mahomedans in Bengal. The Bengali Mahomedans used to continue in the same vocations which they had pursued before. Hence there were no dissensions for economic reasons amongst them and their Hindu neighbours. They used to carry on their respective business undisturbed by others.

3. With the advent of the English, a marked change came over the economic and social condition of the country. The English drew away the intel-

ligentia from villages to the Sub-divisional and District towns newly established by them. And these were the so-called middle-class gentry consist- of Brahmins, Kayesthas and Vaidyas. At that time Bengal was really *Sonar Bangla* and there was prosper- ity in villages. Naturally, as these intelli- gent classes were drawn to the towns, the villages were left into the hands of the cultivators. These middle classes gradually parted with their lands for a song in favour of the persons who used to cultivate these lands for them. Thus villages gradually became veritable abodes of discord amongst the resi- dents who remained there. There was hardly any person left to guide them or to look to their comfort and convenience.

4. The landlords who generally used to reside within their estates or used to visit them yearly gave up this practice for the following reasons, viz. : (1) the protection of the villages which were in their hands passed into those of the police; (2) the Cesses levied on them made them feel that they were no longer responsible for the improvement of the villages; (3) the passing of the Bengal Tenancy Act took away from them practically the ownership of the land; (4) unhealthy state of the villages. They naturally took up their abode in the newly established towns like others and forgot their duty towards tenants.

5. The East India Company at the very outset established Permanent Settlement in Bengal to raise revenue with which they subjugated the rest of India. Warren Hastings laid the foundation for it

which was then called the Decennial Settlement and it was Lord Cornwallis who made the Settlement permanent in 1793. They were in my opinion the greatest administrators who came out to India under the East India Company, for they knew full well that the East India Company was not rich enough then to supply them with men and money by which the whole of India could be brought under their control. Thus from the money secured from Bengal and with the help of intelligent Bengalees they occupied India and established their rule. It is for this purpose that they established schools and colleges to teach intelligent Bengalee youths how to work under them and carry on the administration. Gradually the Hindu intelligentsia were drawn away by them from the villages. The Government never cared to look after the villages about which they knew so little. On the contrary much harm was done by their action in obstructing the water-courses through Railways and embankments and canals. It gave rise to Malaria which broke out in a virulent form and depopulated many villages.

6. With the spread of English education, the Bengalee Hindus of the higher castes imitated their English Masters in every thing and forgot altogether their religion and religious customs which were oldest in the civilised world and remained Hindus in name only. They copied not only the customs and mode of living but also the materialism of their masters. In the schools and colleges in which they were brought up no religious instruction

was imparted to the youths of Bengal. Hence they became irreligious and gradually even forgot that they had any religion of their own. In the present day it is difficult to find any young man who has gone through the greatest Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The missionary institutions teach these young men the Holy Bible, and this also in some manner makes them forget their own religion and neglect their own religious books.

7. Gradually living an unnatural life and without any religious education, they easily fell a prey to all sorts of vices brought to Bengal and her villages. They became selfish and mean and looked to their own comfort only. And in all these they were influenced by their English masters and much more by their countrymen who had the misfortune to visit the west and bring with them the western ideas and culture which they spread broadcast amongst their countrymen who readily imbibed them.

8. In this way the Bengalees became luxurious and their wants increased abnormally. The result was that the wealth which had been formerly stored in villages in the shape of granaries disappeared and they purchased western trinkets with that money which gave rise to economic distress amongst them. This became more so when every blessed being forgot his crafts and trade and began to join schools and colleges in order to be either lawyer or join medical and engineering professions or the professions of clerks or lawyers' clerks, viz., touts, who in order to gain their

living drew the poor villagers to law courts and brought about their ruin. This is how all industries have vanished from Bengal and trade passed away from the hands of Bengalis. Their luxurious mode of living has brought about economic distress to the people. The agriculturists who are still cultivating the lands can not make two ends meet although they are getting high prices for their crops. Why? Because they also like the middle classes have given up their simple habits. And brotherly help which was prevalent in Bengal villages having disappeared, they are trying to cheat every body in the best way they can. This is due to their loss of religious faith and practice.

9. Some say Bengal is becoming richer day by day and some say she is becoming poorer. If Bengal is represented by Calcutta or some district towns, it may strike an outsider that she has become richer than what she was before but a man like me residing mostly in the interior and knowing her villages fully well can say with firmness that she has become poorer. For as the saying is that one swallow does not make a summer, so also one Calcutta or a dozen or two prosperous district towns cannot make up the prosperity of the whole of Bengal. Bengal is still composed of more than 84,981 villages (*vide* Census Report 1921) and truly miserable is their present condition. At one time these villages were prosperous, healthy and populous but now a day they have become poor, unhealthy and thinly populated. The principal cause is that they have been deserted by the rich and influential people

who once resided there. It is to be admired by every one that Bengal has practically got no industries and that it is an agricultural country, pure and simple whose wealth is produced from the lands. How that wealth is being spent can be seen at a glance in passing through Calcutta or any other district town. It is the produce of the land from which fat salaries for the officials and heavy fees for the lawyers and the doctors are paid, and all the imported articles from which Government derive their customs revenue are also exchanged for this agricultural wealth. The lands which maintain so many classes of men living in high and luxurious style are sure to be impoverished year after year. It is only because the soil of this province is exceedingly rich that it is still able to meet the cost of this huge paraphernalia of modern civilisation. No one thinks of bringing money from outside and enriching and improving the soil but all squander it away on useless foreign luxuries. To give only one instance : In Calcutta alone there are 13 thousand motor cars running daily, of which six thousand, I believe, are owned by Bengalees. If their average price is Rs. 3,000 each, then the so-called educated Bengalees have sent Rs. 1,80,00,000 (one crore and eighty lakhs) on motor cars alone from Bengal to Europe and America impoverishing their own country. Then they are spending on an average Rs. 200 for each car monthly which means that Rs. 12,00,000 (Twelve lakhs) are spent on this head each month by them. And still they

call themselves educated ! Forty years ago, people residing in towns used to visit their native villages during the Puja and other holidays and the opulent among them used to spend money according to their means on these occasions. Now a days it has become a fashion with everybody to go to the Santal Parganas, Puri, Benares, Darjeeling and such like places during their holidays. Thus instead of spending their money in their own villages, they go and spend it outside Bengal and pay heavy railway fares both ways to pose as respectable and enlightened men before their neighbours. Those amongst them who are more " advanced " and more " respectable " go further and spend their holidays in England. Consequently the villages which once smiled with joy during the Puja season do not now-a-days know what Puja is. Now if even a portion of this money spent as above for feeding their vanity had been spent in those villages, I believe the condition of those villages would have been different and they would not have been so insanitary and poor. Villagers would not have then suffered and died as they do now for want of good drinking water and would have got some portion of this money with which they could have improved their lands. Besides, there would have been established a contact between the rich men of the towns and the poor men of the villages and the former would have seen with their own eyes the condition of the lands which support them. For this state of things, however, our English masters are principally to be blamed and rightly. For with the ad-

vent of summer they go to hill stations and those of our countrymen who want to gain some favour from the high officials are compelled to flock there. Gradually it becomes a fashionable habit with them—this annual sojourn to the hills and a false sense of respectability comes to be associated with it.

10. Our English masters have forgotten that it was the wealth of Bengal and energy of the Bengalees which consolidated their Indian Empire. They pat the landlords on their backs and ask them to subscribe to the various funds started under official patronage and encourage them to live like Europeans. They have also passed laws and regulations calculated to impoverish them with the result that most of them have become poor like church mouse. There have arisen another class of public men who to show their public spirit and zeal for the welfare of their country men try to prove in Councils, in newspapers and in their public utterances that the Bengal landlords are rogues, cheats and cut-throats and are sucking the life-blood of their tenants. But will those gentlemen place their hands on their hearts and say truly and honestly that they have brought money from outside and enriched their country and that they are not dependent on the self-same land for their maintenance? In order to gain applause from high officials and add title to their names and to secure well-paid jobs for their ill-educated hopefuls, they do these things but they forget the real point at issue. I do not deny for one moment that there are some oppressive landlords in Bengal but their number is

very limited, and the landlords as a class should not be blamed for the mis-deeds of a few. There are many so-called educated men who instead of teaching these landlords by their own action how to behave properly themselves help those landlords in oppressing their tenants and make a profit out of it.

11. The education which we are receiving and which we are imparting to our boys is not the sort of education which a Hindu ought to have. Present education has become synonymous with loss of faith in religion and the learning of luxurious habits. In the good old days a Rishi although dressed like the poorest people of the present day was worshipped even by the King. Now a days it is not the birth or education which counts in our country but the wealth and its outer manifestations. This is the result of our contact with our foreign masters. So every one tries to dress and move so that he may be counted as educated and rich. It is this outward manifestation of riches which has produced all the evils in our society. Even a common cultivator now tries to show himself up in the best of garments procured by selling his paddy which could maintain his family for one month or so. The fashion has grown more prominent amongst the educated middle classes and specially amongst their youngmen in order to procure money for whose outfit their guardians would sometimes even fast. This is how people are becoming poorer in wealth and health and falling easy prey to all sorts of diseases which were unknown before.

12. Every one who is able to earn money runs to Calcutta to erect a house and the reason he gives for this practice is the unhealthiness of the villages. It is true to some extent; but he forgets that if he had spent some portion of that money on the improvement of the villages, the villages would have been more healthy and he could have lived there with much less expense.

13. Those who are residents of Calcutta now feel what mistake they have committed in building houses in Calcutta and living there in a style which they can ill afford. They feel it much more when they find that their children are growing up and imbibing more luxurious habits and consequently living is becoming dearer. I think I am right when I say that almost 90 per cent of the middle class Bengali population can not afford to give nourishing food to their children and for sheer want they purchase the cheapest articles which are all adulterated and therefore their children suffer most from diseases and become feeble-bodied and infirm. If an examination of school-going and college-going children in Calcutta be made, I am sure this statement will be proved correct. Now a days three or more families live in one house which means that there are one or two rooms for each family. Consequently they are huddled together and readily become victims to all sorts of diseases. The bigger Calcutta becomes in size and extent, the greater becomes the difficulty of the dwellers but still the so-called educated people flock to Calcutta to live there permanently !

14. For political motives and for the sake of bettering their condition in life all Bengalees are trying to educate their sons in the manner above stated and some of them who are rich send them to England and other foreign countries to finish their education. For each of them on an average at least Rs. 15,000 or more are spent but when these young men return from abroad, it is found that their education is of very little help to them for undertaking any large pursuits to enrich themselves or their country. On the other hand they come back with ideas and habits which are opposed to Hindu modes of life and thought. They poison the minds of the younger generation at home with these ideas and influence their future career.

15. I beseech my countrymen to abandon this course and give their children an education based on religion. This education can only be given in villages and not in towns like Calcutta and instead of petitioning the Government and finding fault with them by long speeches in and outside the Council Chamber and writing long articles in newspapers, we ought to unite ourselves on a common platform and try our best to reconstruct the decaying village life. The scheme which I would advocate for this purpose is something like the following:—We should give up our luxurious habits, and put into the hands of an association the money which every one of us will save by doing so every month, and spend it in ameliorating the condition of the villages. These associations are to be formed in every district and subdivision and

the members must sacredly promise to give up these luxurious habits and place at the disposal of the Committee the money which is available to every one of them. The Central Committee will be composed of His Excellency the Governor of Bengal as President and one representative from each of the following Associations—1. British Indian Association. 2. Bengal Landholder's Association. 3. Indian Association. 4. Swarajya Party. 5. National Mahomedan Association. 6. Khilafat Committee. 7. One eminent Kabiraj and four or five other co-opted members nominated by His Excellency from Sanitary Department, Engineering Department and other Government officers.

(2) A District Committee will be composed of a President, who is a resident landlord of the district paying at least Rs. 5,000/- revenue either to the Government or to a superior landlord or pay Rs. 100 as income-tax and ten elected members with having some property qualification and who are residents of the district.

(3) A Sub-divisional Committee in the above manner will be composed of ten residents of the locality and will be elected also. Secondary schools will be in charge of this Committee.

(4). Twenty villages will form a Board or Committee and they will be also elected from the members of the Village union.,

(5). A village consisting of 50 resident house owners will be called a Village Union. The president of this village union will be the landlord of the village and five or six opulent residents of the village will

compose the executive committee of the union which will look after all matters relating to village sanitation, education, drinking water and other works of public utility. The accounts of each Committee are to be audited every three months by Government auditors. All Committees will hold office for 5 years.

I believe sufficient fund will be available in the course of a year if we earnestly work with this idea in our mind.

16. Bengali youths move heaven and earth to secure a clerical job or to enter some other profession but few can secure any. There are thousands who are still dependent on their guardians for maintenance. I request them to place themselves at the disposal of these Committees and draw living wages as were prevalent in Bengal and not as was defined by some of our anglicised countrymen and religiously promise to give up all luxurious habits and modes of living and live an honest life and do good to others. Then after a decade they will find that their brothers will not have any difficulty in earning their livelihood in a decent way and their fellow villagers will be benefitted thereby, and that villages will be again what they were in the past, namely, healthy, populous and prosperous.

17. Landlords of Bengal, you were the natural leaders of this Province and you can regain this position if you like. You should come in contact with the villagers who are your tenants and if you religiously promise to give up luxurious habits and live amongst them at least 6 months a

year and spend the money thus saved for their improvement, then soon you will find that the villages have improved under your personal care and supervision and the condition of the villagers who are your tenants has been better. It will be then easy for you to collect rents and you will not have to seek the help of the Law Courts, Lawyers and Lawyers' clerks for realising them. I earnestly beseech you to accède to my humble request and begin again to live in your villages at least for some months in the year, say from December to May or June like a model Hindu landlord without external show and pomp. By this line of conduct you will draw your tenants closer to you and they will consequently by your example live like model Hindu tenants. This will decrease your wants and the wants of your tenants and benefit both of you. The result will be that prosperity will be restored after ten years or so, malaria and other diseases will be a thing of the past and you will be able to live all the year round in the villages with your family comfortably and peacefully. I hope through the British Indian Association or the Bengal Land Holders' Association you will begin this movement. Do not for a moment think that you will be despised by your countrymen if you give up luxurious living in towns. In course of time you will find that you have been getting richer than what you are now and all your debts will be paid off and your ancestral property will be saved from the hands of the money-lenders.

18. In Hindu Society, Brahmins are the leaders of thought and culture and for this reason they

were held in high esteem in the past. The descendants of the Brahmins of old have forsaken their ancestral customs and mode of living and have joined others, in the struggle for life. They have forgotten that material prosperity is not the end of life and that there is a higher ideal which their ancestors taught and by their own ideal lives encouraged men to follow Brahmins of Bengal ! I do not ask you to give up your present position and be a " Rishi " at once, but I request you most humbly to consider these facts and educate your children in a way that in future they can gradually adopt the profession of teachers and devote themselves to the task of educating their own villagers and by establishing " Tols " teach young men how to live a life of Brahmacharyya. It is gradually becoming difficult to find good *Purohit* and *Guru* amongst you. So I again beseech you to take up this line of work and live a religious life to the ultimate benefit of yourselves, your disciples and the rest of mankind. Yours was a noble task and with your relinquishment of this task has vanished the influence of Hinduism. For whereas you have deviated by one foot from the right path, others have deviated by hundred feet and thus chaos has been brought out in Hindu society and Hindu religion. Kindly take up your leadership once more and teach your benighted countrymen the religion of your forefathers so that in time Hinduism may spread over the whole of Hindusthan and the Bengali Brahmin may lead others to act up to the same ideal all over India.

19. There is at present a great controversy about the position of the Kayasthas in the Hindu social order and I do not like to raise a tempest in taking up that subject. I beg only to point out what is well known to every body that the Kayasthas were next to the Brahmins in point of influence in Hindu Society. It is they who maintained the Brahmins in the Society as it is from them that the gift of lands and other things used to pass to the latter in the past. I request my Kayastha brethren to place their sons under the Committees which may be started by the Bengal Landholders Association or any other Association like the Indian Association or the British Indian Association and to allow them to work drawing only living wages for the uplift of their own country. In intelligence they are second to none. If they employ this intelligence with honest labour and act under the instructions of these Committees, they will do good not only to the villages but through them they will also benefit themselves and the coming generations of Kayasthas. Those who have got lands in their villages I would request to work in these lands and employ their intelligence in developing them in the best way possible. Other co-villagers of theirs will then follow in their foot-steps. But first of all they should promise to go back to their religion and adopt simple habits of living. If they follow this advice, in a decade they will be able to show others what improvement they have made.

20. All over Bengal it was the Baidyas who treated people during their illness. I remember

full well that when I was a young boy and suffered from malaria of a virulent type, the best medical practitioners of that period failed to do any good to me and that it was ultimately late Kaviraj Gouri Nath Sen who cured me of the disease. Like the Brahmins, the Baidyas have undisputedly a profession for themselves. To cure the suffering humanity of their maladies is the noblest task which one can perform. The descendants of these Baidyas are still living in Bengal, but unfortunately they have given up the profession of their forefathers and joined their other fellow countrymen to earn as much money as possible with the least exertion within the shortest time. Hence some of them are selling hair oils or patent medicines copying the prescriptions of European Doctors. 'Alas! they have forgotten the medical art and skill of their forefathers which could cure every sort of human disease. I humbly beseech them to forget the present and guard up their loins and form a society of their own for their improvement and teach their sons the healing art so that at no distant date they may go to the villages and do the same thing which their forefathers used to do. There is hardly any person in many villages who can diagnose now a days (it is a pity and I say it with tears in my eyes) a case of fever by feeling the pulse of a patient without the help of imported clinical thermometers. I earnestly hope my Kaviraj fellow countrymen will act according to my suggestion and give up the luxurious habits and employ the money saved thereby in forming the above men-

tioned society and making and preparing medicines which can be sold to the other Kavi-rajcs practising in the villages at a low price so that the general public will find their utility and cheapness.

21. Amongst the Hindu inhabitants of Bengal *Satgopes* and *Koibartas* (present day *Mahishyas*) were the persons who used to cultivate lands. Now amongst the *Satgopes* it has become a custom to have their lands cultivated by the poor men of their community and enjoy its profit. I have visited various places in Bengal and have been told that if they have got granaries full of paddy they will be called *Kulins* amongst their community. They are of late founding *Sabhas* for promoting the welfare of their clansmen although in what respect is not known to me; but what I find is that they are taking to the so-called education very fast and have begun to imitate the Brahmins, Kayasthas and Baidyas and follow in their footsteps. Unfortunately they forget that by imitating them they are digging their own graves. It is well that some of them at least have found out this and are trying to get back to their original fold but they cannot do this heartily because they fear that their well-to-do kinsmen will despise them. The well-to-do amongst the community ought to rectify this mistake by curtailing their expensive modes of living. They should form agricultural societies by which to improve agriculture. I earnestly request them all to take to their ancestral profession and produce more abundant and varied crops from their lands so that their clansman and others may get on well in life. Otherwise they will be ill-

fed and will gradually die as they are now doing of malaria and other diseases with the result that the soil of Bengal will know them no more and that it will be cultivated by aboriginal tribes.

22. As regards the *Mahishyas* (*Koibartas*), they had originally three occupations. They originally used to live near the rivers and were good boatmen. I had seen them plying boats in the rivers in my boyhood. They were so very adept in this that they used to ply their boats in the river inspite of heavy gales. My belief is that they were the sailors of the olden days who have given up that profession almost for good and taken to other professions such as those of lawyers, lawyers' clerks and clerks. Some of them who took to agriculture are producing better crops than the latter and as cultivators they are better off. They are extremely intelligent and some of them are entering Mills as fitters and vicemen etc. and earning decent wages but squandering almost everything in frivolities of life. Their another profession was to grow Mulberries and silk-worms in some part of the country for which they are called *Tute Kaibart* still now. But silk-worm rearing has been given up by them and Bengal which used to export silk and silken goods now import these commodities. My earnest request to them is to betake themselves again to the profession of their forefathers.

23. Next to these are *Bagdis* whose principal profession was originally keeping the peace of the country under the landlords and working in the field under the cultivators and catching carp from

the rivers during the rainy season and culturing them in a pond and selling them. They are still carrying on their original trade and earning a decent livelihood but recently they have begun to call themselves *Bagra Kshatria* at the instance of some 'rich' people of their community and are trying to give up their former profession. This will bring about their ruin in no distant future. I earnestly request their leaders to give up this idea and stick to the work of their forefathers. Next to their number is the *Namasudras* who are to be found in East Bengal. Their work I believe is cultivation only. From the newspapers I find they are trying to form a society of their own but I would earnestly advise them to form a society of their own and cultivate their land as they were doing from time immemorial, and not to bring in to their head higher ideas which instead of bettering would only ruin their future.

24. There are various other small classes living in Bengal and they derive their surnames according to their respective callings. I earnestly request them not to give up their ancestral callings by taking University degrees which have been found by all to be of no value. They are divided into various sub-classes each having its distinctive work to do as indicated by its family name. If they stick to their profession they will drive out others who have invaded Bengal from outside such as Behar and Orissa and are making themselves rich at their expense. In Calcutta no Bengali barber, carpenter, washerman, blacksmith potter, fisherman, milk-man etc., can be had. They have all in their turn taken to

educated professions and have given up the works of their forefathers and consequently they have been supplanted by the people from Behar and Orissa. It is to their benefit if they revert to their own special works.

25. Now-a-days Mahomedans form a very large community. Many of them are converts from Hinduism and even now in the village are carrying on the same profession as before their conversion. If they are not interfered with by their educated co-religionist, they will pass their days in villages carrying on their own work. So I earnestly request the educated Mahomedan leaders to see that they are not diverted from their homes and lands and taken to Calcutta and other towns for the so-called education and being educated in these places are not made unfit for hard manual labour which they generally do in villages. In order to carry on their own work smoothly, our English masters had first of all patted the Hindus on their backs and then when they found that the Hindus were becoming too numerous to be resisted, they took the handful of educated Mahomedans by the hand and are making them understand that they will get higher appointments as soon as they have become educated like the former. In some cases some Government appointments are kept even reserved for them and orders are issued to the heads of the departments for appointing a certain percentage of Mahomedans to public offices. My educated Mahomedan friends ought to

have seen at a glance this dodge at the very outset and not to have asked their co-religionists to give up their occupation and educate themselves in schools and colleges to secure Government appointments. They are educated and intelligent and they ought to have been warned by the fate of their Hindu countrymen. It should be well-known to them that 50 years or more ago the Hindus as a class were more numerous and prosperous than what they are now. Many once smiling Hindu villages are to-day in utter ruins. Many once oppulent middle class Hindu families have to-day completely died down. What is the cause of this lamentable state of things? If they care to consider the matter, they will see that this is due to the fact that high western education has taught them luxury and allied vices and that their descendants brought up in that atmosphere have become consequently poor and are dying from famine and diseases. Seeing this before their eyes they ought to find out their own follies and ask their co-religionists to stick to their normal profession by which their ancestors have lived happily and peacefully. I hope and trust that my educated Mahomedan country men will accept my views and join the Hindus wholeheartedly in improving the condition of the Bengal villages.

26. I am not opposed to mass education. But the nature of education to be imparted as well as the mode of imparting it to our boys must be something almost radically different from what they are now. My ideas on the subject are briefly as follows.

Pathsalas will be started in every village where boys and girls of the age of 6 to 10 years will sit together and read in the afternoon and learn the Bengali, language, Arithmetic Subhankari etc. The text books will be compiled from or be based on the religious books so that the students will be impressed with them and that impression will be of immense benefit to them in future. In the morning they will do their domestic works with their parents and learn their respective vocation from them, so that when they leave the pathsalas they can take up their respective professions in right earnest. The cultivators will be encouraged to grow cotton in their lands and the boys and girls will be taught to spin yarn in their leisure moments daily for half an hour. This yarn will be utilised in making clothes and napkins for them and their parents. The teacher will be paid a certain sum by the Government and he will get over and above this some remuneration in kind from the parents of his pupils. From each pathsala the teacher will select one pupil who will be sent to the secondary school and the rest of the boys will be taught by the teacher for another two years or so. From the age of twelve the boys will help their fathers in their respective professions and the girls after they attain 10 years of age will learn all sorts of domestic works from her mother so that when she gets married she can be a good housewife and manage her household duties herself.

27. Secondary schools will be established in

every district but they must be situated outside the town area and not in the town itself. For when young boys come to towns they generally acquire the luxurious modes of living and other evil habits which are generally prevalent therein. These schools will be free schools. Religious teaching will be compulsory in them and mornings will be devoted to agriculture and other cognate subjects by which they can learn some outdoor or other kinds of work which may be useful to them in future. The boys will join their school at the age of ten and leave them at the age of sixteen and will be taught such general subjects, as Bengali, Sanskrit, English, Mathematics and some primary books of science. This will give them a grounding in all the subjects generally taught in a university, so that with the advice of their head master they will be able to select the line which they want to take in the University after leaving their schools. In these schools, proper physical training, military drilling and all kinds of outdoor games will be taught to them and they will be compulsory. The maximum number of pupils in a school will be two hundred.

28. For carrying out all these into effect, vast sums of money are required. My suggestion is that people of the province will subscribe half of the capital amount and half of the recurring expenses yearly and approach the Government for the other half. The work is of vast magnitude and cannot be done all in one year but if it is taken up in right earnest, it can show appreciable result in the course of a decade or so.

29. My humble and last submission to my countrymen is that they have tried politics for the last 40 years and have absolutely failed to remedy the evils prevalent in the country. The disease has on the other hand become chronic. I appeal to them to eschew politics for some time and to try this method of constructive work whole-heartedly. I hope that in 10 years they will be able to show to their sons that they have done something good for their motherland. By following in their footsteps, the latter will find that Bengal has become once again the smiling and prosperous country which she was fifty years ago. My countrymen can see for themselves how much money and how much energy are being lost yearly in their electoral campaigns which instead of drawing them closer are making them only more disunited and more jealous of one another. The reason for all this is not far to seek ; it is irreligion and improper education which are the root cause of all evil in the land.

30. I humbly beseech His Excellency the Governor of Bengal to read this and take such measures as may place Bengal—which is under his care—on its old footing and make her smile again. This will bring the blessings of Almighty on him and his name will be a household word amongst the future generations of Bengalees. His Excellency in his speech delivered at the District Boards, Conference held on 3rd July 1924 at the Government House Calcutta said—“Experience has shown, as I explained at Chinsurah two days ago, that even district boards are too large administrative units to solve the problem, however liberally they may be assisted

by Government. What is wanted is the co-operation of even smaller bodies, the organisation in fact of the villages themselves. Let me further emphasise my argument by putting it in the form of a parable. *Even a strong man cannot break a bundle of sticks, if they remain united, yet a mere child can break each stick if taken separately, etc., etc., etc.*" This has emboldened me to write this pamphlet. His Excellency spoke of smaller units than the District Boards and Local Boards and he ought to trust the landlords of Bengal in carrying out his purpose in view. The District Boards have been established for forty years, but it is doubtful whether any real good has been done by them to the people of the district. Only they have squandered peoples' hard-earned money in high salaries of their staff and their T. A's. The same thing has been done in the Education Department of the Government also. For distributing paltry sums to the poor village schools there are hosts of Sub-Inspectors, Deputy Inspectors and Inspectors. The Local Self-Government Act will be a failure, for the only sum at the disposal of the Circle Officer is the Chowkidari tax which although since its beginning quadrupled in some cases has produced no tangible result. For whose benefit, therefore, the circle officers have been appointed, I for a moment cannot understand. I humbly beseech His Excellency to put an end to this system which is maintained by the taxes collected from the poor landlords and their tenants and place these sums thus saved as well as the revenue derived from Roads and Public Work Cess in the hands of

the landlords of the district who have got large stakes in the districts and request them to raise certain funds to which the Government should also contribute a like amount. With these sums the problems of education, sanitation, medical arrangements and the supply of drinking water will be solved. The landlords will keep regular accounts of the money handed over to them and also of the amount they may collect from their respective jurisdictions. The accounts are to be audited by the Government Auditors and if there is any defalcation, the landlords will be dealt with by the ordinary laws of the land. In my humble opinion this is the best way in which Bengalees can be taught to be a self-respecting nation and learn self-help and brother-help simultaneously. In the days gone by, it is the landlords who used to preserve the peace and tranquility of the country but now a days that power has been wrested from them. One Sub-Inspector and half a dozen constables have been placed in an area of nearly 100 square miles. If these half a dozen Constables and a Sub-Inspector can keep the peace of such a large area, that of the smaller unit which I suggest can be safely placed in the hands of these landlords. I appeal to the Government to restore this old power to the landlords. There will be thus a saving of a large sum of money which can be used for the betterment of these villages. The police instead of bringing peace and tranquility amongst the villagers is to-day creating unholy atmosphere and teaching them how to quarrel and bring false

cases against one another. There are already heart-burning and jealousy amongst the councillors who are trying to become Mimisters. So I humbly beg His Excellency to take the Transferred Departments under his own control and appoint Indian Secretaries to manage them under him. He will be then in a position to directly know what is being done in these departments and to give instructions to the landlords and hear from them personally what they are doing.

32. Before concluding, I would request my countrymen to read the following immortal lines over and over again and ponder over them :—

“ Religion ! what treasure untold
Resides in that heavenly name
More precious than silver and gold
Or all this earth can afford.”

“Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said
This is my own, my native land?”
